(c) if so, the programme drawn up for different States; and

(d) the specific schemes drawn up for the expansion of telecommunications in Orissa during the 8th Five Year Plan

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) The following actions, *inter-alia*, were taken during the 7th Plan for expansion of the telecommunication network : —

—Net addition of about 19.6 lakh lines of local switching capacity

—Net addition of about 16.9 lakh Direct Exchange Lines

—Extension of Subscriber Trunk Dialling facility to cover 80% of the network

—Net addition of about 6800 Long Distance Public Telephones in rural areas

—Capacity addition of about 10760 telex lines

—Commissioning of about 53 Satellite Earth Stations

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Subject to availability of resources, the main programme common for all States include :—

(i) to expand network to contain waiting list to one year in all exchange systems with a capacity of 5000 lines and above and to make telephones practically available on demand in other exchange areas;

(ii) to provide Public Telephone in every gram panchayat;

(iii) to continue to provide telex connections on demand.

(d) The draft 8th Plan proposals of Orissa Telecom Circle envisage addition of 94,000 lines of local switching capacity, 61,000 Direct Exchange Lines, 690 telex lines and 10 national telex exchanges and public telephone for each gram panchayat.

Passenger ferry service between Rameshwaram and Talaimannar

1588. SHRI PASUMPON THA. KIRUTTINAN : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a consistent demand to renew the passenger ferry service between Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu and Talaimannar in Sri Lanka;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government's of Sri Lanka and India;

(c) whether any action has been initiated; if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if the answer to part (c) is in negative, the specific reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI K. P. UNNIKRISHNAN) : (a) to (c) The Government has recently received a request from the Government of Sri Lanka for early resumption of the ferry service between Rameshwaram and Talaimannar. The Government may consider the resumption of the ferry service after tying up the various infrastructural and logistic factors, both at the Indian and Sri Lankan ends.

(d) Does not arise.

Smuggling of arms into Punjab

1589. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem which appeared in the Indian Express of 27th April, 1990 under the caption "Large number of arms smuggled into Punjab";